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/gizəskɪfi/ (Give Me a Clue) - Linguistic Features of Scottish Accents and Dialects

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/gizəskɪfi/ (Give Me a Clue) –
Linguistic Features of Scottish
Accents and Dialects

Sarah Knudsen


Linguistics Colloquium Fall 2012




Short History Lesson

- History of Scotland and England
 - Britain
 - Wars, exploitation, changing royalty, Highland clearances
- Use different currencies (Scottish pound and English pound) that are “mutually” accepted
- Scottish Independence in 2014 vote
 - “...post 1997, with the establishment of a parliament with limited jurisdictions in Scotland...” (Vincent and Harrow 377)
- “In general, the Scottish people do not particularly like the English” (Hoyer 11)

SCOTS DIALECTS

 Southern Scots (S)


 Central Scots


North East Central (NEC)

South East Central (SEC)

West Central (WC)

South West Central (SWC)


 Ulster Scots (UL)

 Northern Scots

South Northern (SN)

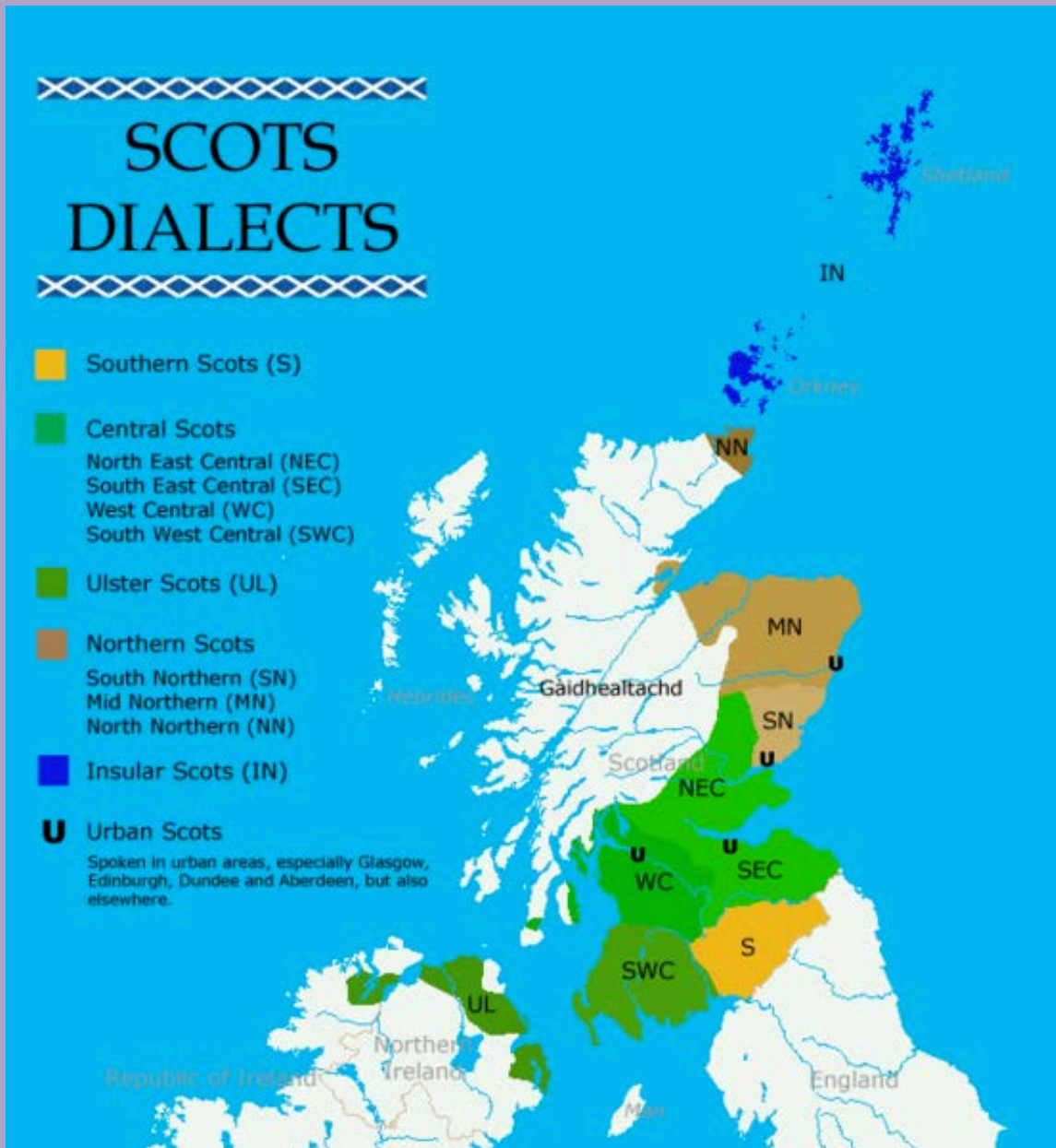
Mid Northern (MN)

North Northern (NN)

 Insular Scots (IN)

U Urban Scots

Spoken in urban areas, especially Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, but also elsewhere.





Linguistic Geography of Scotland

- Geography of Scotland
 - Scotland split into many regions – ie. West coast, East coast, Highlands region, Borders region, the Islands, Doric, Kingdom of Fife, Lowlands
 - Even towns 10km apart have differences in speech
 - Gaelic in the Highlands (Alba)
 - Trying to revive it through schools, television
 - Broad Scots
 - A distinct language, though many words and sounds are mixed into Scottish dialects
 - Has its own dialects
 - Ie. “braw cleeds” = “handsome/nice clothes”

According to Studies, Common Linguistic Features of Scottish Accents and Dialects

- Duration of Vowels

- Tend to be shorter in duration

- Aitken's Law - "...all vowels and diphthongs are long in stressed open syllables, before voiced fricatives and /r/ and before morpheme boundaries; and short elsewhere; with the two exceptions...which are invariably short" (McClure 10)
 - The rules and analyses for this *Scottish Vowel Length Rule* are argued by Carr

- Pre-rhotic vowels tend to be neutralized

- /r/ pronunciation variations responsible for the neutralization of pre-rhotic vowels, especially in Middle Class speech (Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith 265)



More Features of Accents

- Post vocalic /r/
 - Post vocalic /r/ tends to be realized as a one or two tap trill (McClure 11)
 - Bunched articulations (Middle Class) and tongue-tip/tongue-front raised variants (Working Class) articulation of /r/ (Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith 256)
 - Middle Class using strongly rhotic postvocalic /r/ so that it almost becomes retroflex /ɻ/, while Working Class is often derhoticising /r/, making it almost vowel like (Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith 257)
- TH Fronting
 - Using /f/ for /θ/, especially in Glaswegian adolescents (Stuart-Smith, Timmons, Tweedie 222)

More Features of Dialects

- General Scots-specific words and features (Hoyer 18)
 - **Aye** – meaning “yes”
 - **-nae** – negative suffix
 - **/jɛ/** - meaning “you”

My Research

- Voice recorded interviews
 - Native Scottish people
 - Non-native people who had lived in Scotland for at least 1 year
- Asked demographic, linguistic, and sociolinguistic questions
- I recorded their answers to my questions, as well as noted their own speech patterns that they may not have realized they used
 - Most people reduced their accents so that I could understand

Dialects: Scottish People's Views

- “Relatively quick speakers, and a quite expressive language”
 - Dreich and Blether
- Lack of /t/, especially word-finally
- Loch vs Lake (/χ/ vs /k/)
- “Harsh” vowels
- /ε/ and /ẽɪ/ instead of /āɪ/
 - If you hear these “you know they must be Scottish”
- A twang, varying levels of “broadness”
- Scottish drawl – dragging out vowel sounds
- Differ from English dialects with /h/ and /r/ pronunciation

Dialects: Other People's Views

- “Definitely the /r/ sound”
 - Trilled and rhotic vowels
- /t/ glottalization and/or not releasing
- Shortening of long vowels
- /eɪ/ and suffix –ae
- The filler /ɛm/ (equivalent to “uh”)
- Contains relic sounds and words



Personal Observations

- **Outwith**
- **Aye** – meaning “yes”, **Wee** – meaning “little”, **mum** – meaning “mom”, **em** – used instead of the filler “um”
- /t/ glottalization
- Suffix –nae for “not” ie. **Cannae** – “cannot”

Possible Reasons for Distinctions

- What the people in my study thought
 - Some developed due to nature of surrounding environment (ie. Jute industry in Dundee caused high, nasal pitch to be heard over machinery)
 - “I’d say it’s more of a class thing than a locale based thing”
 - Upbringing – got thwacked if used “lower-class” broader slang-type speech
 - Code of belonging – can talk in “code” and show solidarity with each other
 - Non-Native thought – “working class people” have a Scottish accent. More educated do not

Article Hypotheses for Distinctions

- Class

- “...social stratification of /r/ at the articulatory level...”
(Lawson, Scobbie and Stuart-Smith 256)
- “In Scottish English, such articulatory variation is in some way perceptible and can be exploited by speakers to index socio-economic class...” (Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith 266)
- The different classes want to linguistically separate themselves from each other (Stuart-Smith, Timmons, and Tweedie 254)
- “...the use of standard and non-standard accents often is correlated subjectively with social class (Abrams and Hogg 202)
 - Middle Class and RP speakers rated higher than Working Class and Cockney speakers

Article Hypotheses for Distinctions

- Separation from England/Scottish Solidarity
 - Middle class speakers, because they tend to have more connections with the English, want to maintain their “Scottishness” by using stereotypically Scottish features; Working class speakers want to use “non-local” features (Stuart-Smith, Timmons, and Tweedie 221)
 - In-group favouritism – many Scottish people preferred Scottish accents to English accents, and their own accent above other Scottish accents (Abrams and Hogg 201)
 - High level of identification with Scotland
 - Scottish regional accents rated “lower on status, but higher on solidarity than English regional accents” (Abrams and Hogg 203)
 - When real status and power differences are not as relevant, loyalties and preferences shift towards the accent closest to the in-group accent (Abrams and Hogg 210)
- With possibility of Scottish independence, may be trying to emphasize “Scottishness”

Limitations

- My research was conducted on a very limited population, typically residing in the Stirling area or Dundee area
 - Not much age variation, small sample size
 - As accents and dialects are highly varied, cannot be exhaustive of all features
- Previous studies tend to focus on dialects and accents in Central Scotland (Edinburgh and Glasgow) (Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith 257)
 - Creates a limited scope and decreases generalizability
- Rapid accent change in urban accents (Stuart-Smith, Timmons, and Tweedie 222)
 - Research cannot keep up
- Adolescents seem to show more accent change (Stuart-Smith, Timmons, and Tweedie 223)
 - Accents and dialects vary within geographic groups based on age/sex, not necessarily represented in the research

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